



# Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Annual Review 2010 - 2011



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# Word from our Chair

Despite the mood of austerity that has prevailed over the last year, I am pleased that the Dorset AONB Partnership has managed to achieve a full programme of work to safeguard and celebrate our outstanding landscape. We remain indebted to the dedicated AONB Team, who have worked very hard with our partners to achieve so much.

We have always been very committed to working in partnership with others and this has proven to be the right approach to get things done. Our partnerships with local people, through our Sustainable Development Fund, have again generated great added value, as well as some truly inspirational community action. We have also been pleased to work with local businesses, finding common ground and ways we can help each other while implementing our management plan.

Working together with the family of AONBs has also reaped rewards, securing commitment from Defra to take over the sponsorship responsibility for AONBs from Natural England as from March 2011, putting AONBs on a level footing with National Parks. Working as a family has also allowed us to take a slice of successful regional bids for European and national funding sources.

We are very fortunate to be living in an outstanding part of a wonderful county that's been cared for so well by its landowners and farmers, of the current generation and their predecessors - particularly within the area's large estates. The AONB Partnership continues to provide the owners and managers of the majority of the area advice and support to maintain its landscape quality, for example through the Wildlife Sites Project. This year the project surpassed its targets, helping to bring sites of wildlife value into long term economically viable management. This was another example of good partnership working, with the Dorset Wildlife Trust, Dorset Environment Record Centre and many local landowners.

This will be my last introduction for the Annual Review as, having been Chair of the Dorset AONB for 5 years now, I am stepping down. Andy Foot is my successor, a farmer at Buckland Newton and former Chair of NFU Dorset. I have thoroughly enjoyed being associated with this Partnership and am confident that it will evolve under the current economic pressure to achieve all it sets out to do for our landscape in the future.

**Tim Frost**  
**Dorset AONB Chairman 2006-2011**



**Tim Frost (foreground) visiting hedge laying in the Marshwood Vale, funded by the Dorset AONB Sustainable Development Fund.**

# An Outstanding Landscape

## Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Dorset AONB Partnership is an active, forward-thinking group of organisations that works to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of area. This is a living, working landscape and we work with landowners, communities and businesses to ensure that we all have a resilient and beautiful landscape to pass onto to future generations.

The Dorset AONB was designated in 1959 and is one of 46 AONBs in the UK. The Dorset AONB is the 5th largest of these covering 1,192 km<sup>2</sup>, that's 42% of Dorset. Unlike many other AONBs, it has many market & coastal towns with its boundary, which adds to the character and vibrancy of the landscape. Around 70,000 people live in the AONB and a further 1.35 million are within 20 miles of the boundary.



## What makes the Dorset landscape so OUTSTANDING?

It is no surprise that the **contrast and diversity of the landscape** was identified as one of the special qualities on which it was designated as an AONB. It is really a collection of fine landscapes, from open heaths to rolling chalk hills and intimate vales. There are striking views across this dynamic and complex landscape and still plenty of places that feel tranquil and remote.

The unusually rich **nationally and internationally important wildlife** was another factor for designation – with 80% of all British butterfly and mammal species and 90% of bird species found here. Some very special wildlife sites like the Fleet and Poole Harbour also help make Dorset stand out from the rest.

The Dorset AONB provides a **living textbook and historical record** of rural England, clearly illustrating the development of earth history for all to read. The Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site is a good example of this, telling the story of 185 million years of earth history, as is the South Dorset Ridgeway revealing human settlement in the area since the Bronze Age.

The **cultural association with the landscape** is also considered one of its special qualities. Not only has it inspired artists and writers from the past – including Hardy, Fowles, Barnes and Nash – it continues to inspire a rich community of artists and supports a vibrant creative industry.

## Conserving, enhancing and celebrating the landscape

The Dorset AONB Team, partners and local communities have all been working to implement the Dorset AONB Management Plan 2009 - 2014. This Annual Review shows the progress on these priorities that has been made over the past 12 months and are ordered according to the Management Plan chapters, which you can view online. [Find out more.](#)

# 1 Historic & Built Environment



## South Dorset Ridgeway Heritage Project

**This was a big year for the South Dorset Ridgeway, the ridge of high land just south of Dorchester, from Long Bredy east to Poxwell. The Heritage Project reached its crescendo in this third and final year, surpassing its targets for involving people through festivals, film projects and community action.**

### Festival season

The Roman Festival in May celebrated the rich Roman history of the Ridgeway area with a weekend event at Maumbury Rings in Dorchester. The South Dorset Ridgeway Heritage Project Officer worked closely with Dorchester Town Council, Dorchester BID, The Ancient Wessex Network and Dorset County Museum to deliver this weekend event. Around 1400 people visited the event, watched the displays by re-enactment group Legio II Augusta and took part in one of the many workshops.

In July the two week long South Dorset Ridgeway Festival celebrated the different perspectives of the Ridgeway through outdoor theatre productions, a sponsored walk / run, family storytelling sessions, walks and talks. Working with Dorchester Arts, The British Heart Foundation, The Hardy Society, The National Trust and The Ancient Wessex Network, 15 events were programmed to appeal to a wide audience. Some 800 people attended a production of Romeo and Juliet at Maumbury Rings; 140 people took part in the Ridgeway Challenge, walking or running from Osmington Mills to Goulds Hill or West Bexington; 50 people attended a symposium exploring the different archaeological work on the Ridgeway and 137 people joined a walk or tour with a guest leader.

### The Ridgeway in sound

Over twenty interviews were edited and transcribed, with much help from volunteers for the Ridgeway Voices oral history project. The recordings will be deposited at the Dorset History Centre as an archive and clips are available from the project's website. The wealth of material, stories and personal reminiscence formed the core of Ridgeway Voices, an exhibition supported by photography, moving images and material culture at Dorset County Museum in May and June.

Two audio trails were created to encourage people to explore the Ridgeway and get a better insight into life on the ridge past & present. Each trail is supported by a map marking listening points along public rights of way. The trails are designed to be downloaded and listened to in sequence on a walk or from the comfort of your armchair and are downloadable for free from our website. The trails will also be available shortly via your smartphone. [Find out more.](#)



# 1 Historic & Built Environment

## The Ridgeway on film

Twelve young people took part in moving image making over the Easter Holiday as part of the live IT love IT film IT project. The group of 14-19 year olds made two personal films and some collaborative films, which were screened at the South Dorset Ridgeway Festival in July. Film maker Jorn Ebner was commissioned to work with the young people to pass on some of his skills and knowledge and Jorn also produced two short films. PVA MediaLab worked with the Heritage Project to make this filmmaking happen. [Find out more.](#)



## Parish maps

Sutton Poyntz Village Society launched a new website containing a digital map celebrating their heritage, with support from the Heritage Project. The map includes historical and environmental information about the village, as well as community information about services and events.

Upwey Village Society also published a village map in May 2011 which is displayed in an interpretation board at the Old Schoolrooms in Upwey. Broadmayne History Group has also been working hard on a map. Both projects were grant aided by the Heritage project.



## ... and much more

The Heritage Project, which was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Natural England, continued its impressive programme through to the end of the project in June:

- Ridgeway Voices Exhibition at Dorset County Museum until 25th June. [Virtual exhibition now on the website](#)
- Publication of the South Dorset Ridgeway book in April 2011
- Development of a smartphone application on the iPhone and Android platforms to explore the Ridgeway
- Roman Revels II learning days for schools, working in partnership with the Roman Society and Dorset County Museum

The interest and enthusiasm generated in the Heritage Project led to a new partnership being formed to bid for further funds for a landscape-scale project, which if successful, will begin its development stage in August 2012.

**UPDATE - bid was successful!**  
See page 11 for more details.

[www.southdorsetridgeway.org.uk](http://www.southdorsetridgeway.org.uk)

## Osmington White Horse

Work to restore the White Horse got a boost from the Army Cadet Force. Contractors, funded through a Higher Level Stewardship agreement, removed the limestone scalplings to expose the chalk bedrock and with the help of a helicopter removed the stone-filled bags from the hill side, which would have otherwise been a mammoth task. The next stage is for the restored outline of the Horse to be marked out.



# 2 Biodiversity



**Biodiversity is a fundamental part of the natural beauty of the Dorset AONB. Wildlife is one of the outstanding qualities that underpins the AONB and is shaped by the underlying geology, landforms and land management. We work closely with the Dorset Biodiversity Partnership, its constituent organisations and the wider community to achieve priorities agreed in our management plan.**

## **Wildlife Sites Project a great success**

The Wildlife Sites Project was set up in 2008 to bring a number of eligible Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) into positive conservation management. The project implemented Dorset's LAA National Indicator 197 (Local Wildlife Sites), and we are pleased to report that it exceeded the target with 184 sites brought into positive management (the target being 179).

Dorset AONB worked effectively with the Dorset Wildlife Trust to ensure the success of the project. The AONB team recruited Jake Hancock as a project officer who distributed £111,000 to landowners where no other funds were available, for essential works

such as scrub clearance, woodland management and removal of non-native species. With Jake's help, 28 sites were brought into long term conservation management. The Dorset Wildlife Trust provided management advice and guidance on eligible grant-aid for conservation work, resulting in a further 156 sites moving into positive management.

## **South Winterborne Restoration**

Another success to report is the restoration works on the South Winterborne at Winterborne Came last year. A new channel was created last year and an invertebrate survey of the new channel carried out in April revealed the rare Red Data Book 3 mayfly *Paraleptophlebia werneri* larvae and the notable blackfly species *Metacnephia amphora*.

These results are extremely encouraging and appear to indicate that invertebrate species such as mayfly are mobile and able to quickly colonise favourable habitats.

Thanks to a successful bid to Wessex Water, Dorset Wildlife Trust was able to widen the remit of our Dorset Winterbournes Project to incorporate all chalk streams in the AONB. The Dorset Wild Rivers will target the Frome Valley, the Piddle and the Stour tributaries, using river enhancement works, wetland creation, farm management advice and community involvement.

## **New funding helps develop biodiversity mapping**

Dorset AONB worked alongside the South West Protected Landscapes Forum and some northern French Parcs Naturels Regionales in a successful bid to INTERREG for the Cordiale Project.

In Dorset, we began work on looking at how habitat connectivity mapping can lead to better targeting of conservation and restoration efforts. Dorset Environmental Record Centre was engaged to refine the existing semi-natural habitat data; further work will be undertaken to determine the habitat permeability between it. Developing targeted advice to improve habitat connectivity and therefore landscape resilience to climate change will continue in 2011/12 and will be shared with the wider Cordiale partners.



## 2 Biodiversity

### Big Chalk

This year we began working with Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, North Wessex Downs AONB and Defence Estates (Salisbury Plain) on the development of a 'Big Chalk' Nature Improvement Area (NIA) stretching from Beaminster to the Thames.

This will be a large scale project that will look to integrate conservation work across the chalklands. It will also help coordinate funding bids to maximise opportunities.

**UPDATE:** Parliamentary Undersecretary for the Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon, visited the Dorset AONB and Cranborne Chase AONB in April to learn more about the proposal. We were pleased to hear that NIAs are firmly embedded in the Natural Environment White Paper published in June.

They will be limited in size however, so the Big Chalk NIA is proposed around Salisbury Plain.

### Wild Purbeck

A workshop took place in March which was attended by members of the Dorset Biodiversity Partnership. A number of ideas and suggestions were proposed to secure future resources for the heathland, downland, clay valley and limestone plateau of Purbeck and these are being pulled together into a coherent project.

**UPDATE:** This area is being put forward as a candidate Nature Improvement Area. Watch this space ...



## Dorset AONB Sustainable Development Fund ...supporting biodiversity projects

### Creating Connections

Through our Sustainable Development Fund, we were able to support the Dorset Wildlife Trust Creating Connections project which looked at ways of engaging local communities, individuals, landowners and volunteers with orchards and hedgerows. They were able to demonstrate ways of enhancing the local environment for wildlife, while reconnecting them to the heritage that underpins these habitats and their place in the landscape.

### Wet Woodlink

Again with support from our Sustainable Development Fund, Dorset Wildlife Trust were able to map out the county's valuable wet woodlands - most of which fall within the AONB. These damp woods are home to a host of rare fungi and invertebrates. The project also made a start on surveys and management advice and will continue into 2011-2012.

# 3 Coast & Sea



The Dorset AONB is one of only a handful of AONBs to have sea water within its designated area (The Fleet lagoon and Poole Harbour). We also pay a close interest to what's happening beyond our southern boundary in the wider marine environment. The unique Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site shared with East Devon AONB is globally significant; also incredibly dynamic and constantly changing. Priorities in the AONB Management Plan focus on bringing organisations together to develop integrated management of this sensitive environment.

## Coastal Change Pathfinder

Dorset County Council won a Defra grant to work with communities along the Jurassic Coast to develop ways to cope with a dynamic coastline. The AONB Team was pleased to be able to join in discussions with residents of Charmouth, Seatown, Ringstead and Swanage to explore how we could all respond to a catastrophic (but not totally unlikely) storm event that caused significant change to their communities. [Find out more.](#)

## Monitoring the coast

The Coastal Corridor Plan for the Dorset & East Devon Coast was co-ordinated by the Dorset AONB Partnership in 2008 and continues to provide a useful framework for action. The Plan originally identified the need to monitor the impact of visitors on the biodiversity and tranquillity of the coast and work is now underway to define how best to do this.

Land Use Consultants have been commissioned to undertake work to further develop understanding of how human activities are affecting the high environmental quality of the Jurassic Coast landscape. The findings of the project will help to inform the sustainable management of the coastal corridor and will enable appropriate monitoring to take place regarding the impacts of current policy and practices on the landscape.

## C-SCOPE: iCoast and the Marine Planning pilot

The Dorset AONB team is excited to be involved in this Dorset Coast Forum project twinned with partners in Belgium. An innovative 'one-stop shop' for all coastal activities in Dorset was under development throughout 2010-2011, culminating in its launch in June 2011 on [www.icoast.co.uk](http://www.icoast.co.uk)

Another strand of this project is the ground-breaking work on developing a Marine Spatial Plan. Piloting an approach ahead of a national requirement, this project has brought together partners from industry, conservation and fisheries to develop a sustainable consensus on utilising Dorset's fantastic seas. It has included a comprehensive [Land and Seascape Assessment](#); taking the concept of landscape characterisation out into the Channel!



### Dorset AONB Sustainable Development Fund ...supporting coast & sea projects

#### Great Dorset Beach Clean

The Beach Clean is now an established part of the spring calendar and continues to be well supported by local residents and visitors. As well as cleaning up over 100 bags of rubbish brought up onto the beaches on the high spring tides, the Beach Clean also works to educate people about the dangers of rubbish to wildlife. It is organised by Dorset Countryside with support from the Dorset AONB. [Find out more.](#)



#### Lyme Regis Fossil Festival

Dead ... and Alive! Another successful year for the Fossil Festival brought in thousands of people to get hands on with fossils. As well the science based activities by the Natural History Museum, there was an enjoyable and quirky mix of walks, talks and theatre. This year the Festival took up the International Year of Biodiversity theme, looking at biodiversity of the past and comparing it to the wealth of biodiversity in the area today. [Find out more.](#)



# 4 Land Management & Local Products



## New future for Black Down

The Dorset AONB Partnership and Natural England has worked alongside Dorset Countryside to secure a new future for 124 hectares of land on Black Down, the central and highest part of the South Dorset Ridgeway.

Formerly owned by the Forestry Commission, the land has now been bought by Dorset County Council with help from the Patsy Wood Trust, for public and wildlife benefit.

The Dorset AONB has been chairing a group to develop the vision and strategy for the site, which will improve the heathland habitat as well as develop better public access. The Dorset AONB Sustainable Development Fund supported initial access work so that urgent land management can begin.

## Bid for major new funds for Black Down and the South Dorset Ridgeway

The success of the South Dorset Ridgeway Heritage Project has highlighted the huge interest and potential of the area for wider land management and access improvements. The Dorset AONB team headed a new partnership of enthusiastic organisations which formed to realise this potential by submitting a Landscape Partnership bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund in February.

The bid incorporates an ambitious and innovative programme of work on 126 km<sup>2</sup> of the Ridgeway over the next 6 years and aims to both develop good practice and set up sustainable land management practices on the Ridgeway. The bid totalled £2.9M, with £1.9M requested from HLF and a further £693K identified as in-kind and volunteer match funding.

A total of 38 projects were included within the bid to the four Heritage Lottery Fund programme aims:

- Conserving or restoring built and natural landscape features.
- Increasing community participation in local heritage.
- Increasing access to and learning about the landscape and its heritage.
- Increasing training opportunities in local heritage skills.

Delivery partners, including Bournemouth University, Dorset Countryside, Dorset Biodiversity Partnership, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Forest Education Initiative, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Kingston Maurward College, PVA MediaLab and various departments of Dorset County Council, helped develop project ideas for the Landscape Partnership bid and there was also good support from Parish Councils, land owners and tenants.

**UPDATE - we heard in July that the we were one of only 11 successful bids in Britain. We now have 16 months to develop the bid further prior to a second stage application in November 2012.**



## 4 Land Management & Local Products

### Dorset Arable Project

The Dorset AONB Partnership was pleased to be able to support this second full year of the successful Dorset Arable Project run by the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group. The project works with farmers to develop the best management on their land for farmland birds and arable plants alongside their commercial farming practices. This year, the project achieved 80 visits to 66 farmers which led to 14 Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) applications and 16 joint ELS/Higher Level Stewardship applications that include a focus on delivery of arable options.

In total 300ha of beneficial in-field habitat for farmland birds and arable plants has been created or maintained from previous agreements. The project has continued to facilitate on-farm bird and arable plant surveys by volunteers with over 40 bird surveys and 10 arable plant surveys completed in 2010 -11. Three Farm Open Days for the general public have been held in the AONB which have celebrated what arable farmers are doing for farmland birds and other arable wildlife alongside growing food. There have also been 2 arable farm energy audits on AONB farms.

### Dorset Woodlink

The Dorset AONB Partnership committed funds to both Dorset County Council (DCC) and Dorset Wildlife Trust on their activities around woodlands. DCC carried out work to establish how they could lead on woodfuel distribution around the county and how they could maximise woodfuel supply from their own resources including roadside trees and Dorset Countryside sites.

Dorset Wildlife Trust continued their promotion of woodland management and engagement with the owners of woodlands valuable to the landscape.

### Dorset AONB Sustainable Development Fund supporting land management & local products projects

The **Poole Basin Deer Management Group** received support for a new leaflet targeting local landowners, farmers and communities spreading the message that deer management is necessary and best carried out in a co-ordinated fashion.

We were pleased to fund cheese making training for the **Windswept Cow Cheese Company** in Purbeck, who were keen to develop more consistency in the quality and character of their product. Indeed, a local retailer has noted improvements to the cheese since the training took place.

We also supported the **Dorset Knob Throwing & Frome Valley Food Festival** in Cattistock, that drew in a crowd of over 1000 people despite atrocious weather. The Festival is a good example of how much interest and enthusiasm there still is for local food.



# 5 Accessing, Enjoying & Learning



## A future for water transport in Dorset 1SW off-road cycling project

Working with colleagues in the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Team, the AONB Partnership has made significant progress to explore the feasibility of water-based passenger transport in Dorset. The initial study into waterborne transport conducted last year indicated both issues and opportunities that needed further exploration and this year work has been commissioned to develop recommendations for future action.

Much time has been put into consulting with the public, commercial operators and tourism providers to ensure that plans are well grounded and it was included in the new draft Local Transport Plan which went out for consultation in spring 2011.

The group has also learned from the Fal River Partnership which has combined commercial, public sector and community partners to develop a fully integrated marine and terrestrial transport system.

Building on this work, we were invited to join a consortium bid for EU Interreg funding of around 3 million euros of which the Dorset share would be around 600,000 euros with partners from UK, Eire, Spain and Portugal. The outcome of the bid will be known by September 2011. [Find out more.](#)

Dorset AONB joined up with other protected landscapes in the South West, through the South West Protected Landscapes Forum, to bid for RDPE funds to develop the off road cycling experience in the AONB. Led by the Forestry Commission, the bid was successful in securing £7.5M across the region including funding of £4.6M from the Rural Development Programme for England.

Across the participating protected landscapes, cyclists will benefit from a web-mapper to help them plan routes based upon their cycling ability. Dorset AONB routes will be surveyed in autumn 2011. Grants will also be available to tourism operators to make bike-friendly improvements to their business, such as secure bike lock ups for a B&B. The investment pot stands at £160,000 for the whole South West and is available for spend between 2011 and 2013.

## Wildlife Photographer of the Year works with local schools

This year we supported the successful Jurassic Journey project, featuring the work of photographer Ben Osborne and 3 other artists in an audio visual show that toured rural Artsreach venues.

Dorset AONB also commissioned Ben to work with 6 schools to use photography for getting out of the classroom and exploring the special landscape right outside the school gates.

The schools involved were in Litton Cheney, Loders, Powerstock, Cerne Abbas, Winterborne Stickland and Swanage. Two of the schools set up fixed photography points so they can monitor how their landscape changes with the seasons and through the years. Thorners School in Litton Cheney used their day to look closer at the rope industry that was so important to the Bride Valley and their photos were displayed at the public showing of Jurassic Journey the following week. [Find out more.](#)



# 5 Accessing, Enjoying & Learning

## New Dorset AONB leaflet

Following feedback from Tourist Information Centres, we wanted to develop a new leaflet for people who don't regularly visit the countryside.

We came up with 39 sites across the AONB that offer great views, a place to picnic, fly a kite or have a short walk, suitable for people who have a just a few hours to spare.

Fudges family bakery, based in North Dorset, contacted us through their PR company Mad River and we agreed to work together on promoting the fantastic AONB countryside. Mad River's design skills created our new leaflet; in return we've been able to help them with the Fudges Bicnic campaign through networking and our website.

[Download the leaflet.](#)



## Norden Park & Ride Site

Traffic and transport are major issues within Purbeck with average daily traffic flows on Wareham / Corfe Castle road of 12,000 increasing four-fold during the summer period, impacting heavily upon the environment and quality of life of residents.

Norden Park & Ride is a strategically important site within Purbeck and Dorset AONB has been an active part of the working group with Purbeck District Council to help transform it into a fully multi-modal (bus, rail, walking, cycling, shuttle bus) transport interchange in the future.

Physical improvements this year included new site orientation maps, upgraded site signage and additional fingerposts to encourage use of the walk between Norden and Corfe Castle village. Removal and re-design of signage has been agreed to avoid signage clutter and demonstrate best practice principles from the Coastal Car Parks Design Guide. Important work to secure the best from the site's lease continues.

## The Hardy Country Project

A transport and signage strategy for this project is required to develop sustainable travel options for visiting Hardy locations (his birthplace, Max Gate, Clouds Hill, Stinsford Church initially) and to ensure that visitors can find their way to these locations with as little impact on the landscape from signage as possible.

The Dorset AONB team commenced this work with the National Trust and have taken over chairing the Project to develop wider projects in the future.

## Events

We continued to promote the wealth of interesting events in the AONB run by other partners, through Dorset Coast & Countryside Magazine and our new public E-News. We attended the Dorset Knob Throwing Festival, Springtide Festival, Bridport Food Festival, Melplash Show, Oak Fair at Stock Gaylard and the Pirates Day at Stonebarrow – great events to meet the public and recruit people to our E-News. For the International Year of Biodiversity, we also set up an event at Studland with the National Trust, using textile artist Daisy Bewes.



**Dorset AONB Sustainable Development Fund**  
... supporting accessing, enjoying & learning projects

Tilly & Cliff, created by Lal Hitchcock from material found on Dorset's beaches and photographed by Ben Osborne, became popular characters in the [Jurassic Journey](#) project.

# 6 Planning, Development & Infrastructure



## Input into strategic plans

The Dorset AONB Team works hard to embed AONB principles into the local authorities' strategic planning and development documents by responding to consultations and providing additional technical landscape guidance where appropriate.

There have been many such documents up for consultation this year, and the AONB Team has been assessing impact and highlighting appropriate mitigation and restoration strategy in line with the objectives of AONB policy.

These include:

- Minerals Core and Restoration Strategies
- Flood and Coastal Risk Management Strategies
- District Council Core Strategies
- Planning Policy Statements for Low Carbon Future and Natural & Healthy Environment
- District wide Community Plans

[Find out more.](#)

Responding to a high demand for solar energy installations, the AONB Partnership published guidelines for developers. This guidance included broad principles of choosing an appropriate site and details on what to include in a planning application.

[Find out more.](#)

## Safeguarding Dorset's distinctive fingerposts

Fingerposts give a distinctive character to Dorset's roads but have suffered from neglect over the past decade. The Dorset AONB joined forces with Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB to initiate a public survey of what fingerposts we have left across the county with a view to conserving them in the future.

There has been good public interest in 'fingerpost spotting', with many survey forms sent in as well as old photos. A volunteer has been working with us to record these and we estimate 25% of the highway fingerposts in the county have been surveyed, photographed and details entered on a specially designed database.

Discussions have been initiated with Dorset County Council to define how we can save these distinctive and popular landmarks, bringing good practice from other AONBs on ways to improve the standard while keeping the costs realistic. [Find out more.](#)

## Rural Roads Protocol

The Dorset AONB Team continues to work with Dorset County Council Highways to promote a new approach to road management in line with the Dorset Rural Roads Protocol, adopted as County Council policy in April 2008.

Work commissioned from Ben Hamilton-Baillie by Dorset AONB influenced the design of recent highway works in South Perrott and further work has been done to develop a toolkit for communities, which will be launched in autumn 2012.

The Dorset AONB Team took an active role in the B3157 Coast Road project which has provided a test bed for some of the principles within the Dorset Rural Roads Protocol such as rationalisation of signage, marking village entrances, shared space and psychological traffic calming techniques. [Find out more.](#)



# 6 Planning, Development & Infrastructure

## Innovative design for new Charmouth bridge

Dorset AONB Team has worked with Dorset County Council to help bring artists and engineers together to produce a stunning new bridge for the South West Coast Path National Trail at Charmouth.

Identified in the Coastal Corridor Plan as a potential project for collaboration, the previous footbridge across the Char had reached the end of its maintainable life. The brief to renew it with a limited budget became an interesting collaboration with the Dorset County Council arts team, engineers and countryside rangers; the AONB Team adding landscape expertise and support from the Sustainable Development Fund to ensure a beautiful build.

Artist-designers Sans Façon created the bridge with two distinctly shaped piers responding to the distinct banks. They join and overlap in the middle of the river, creating a wider area for rest, contemplation, or just feeding the ducks and swans. An opened grilled surface between the two piers enhances the separation and allows a playful view of the flow underneath.



New bridge at Charmouth with support from the Dorset AONB Sustainable Development Fund.

# 7 Sustainable Communities



We know that safeguarding Dorset's unique environment is important to many residents in the AONB and believe that community action can play a part in implementing the Dorset AONB Management Plan.

We are keen to support community action in any way we can. As well as inputting into Community Partnership and Parish Plans this year, we have funded specific local initiatives through our Sustainable Development Fund, which have been as varied as the landscape itself.

## Thorners School Discovery Area

A group of enthusiastic school parents and pupils worked hard over the winter to create a wildlife area on the edge of their school grounds. The SDF grant helped them with a new mini orchard and storytelling willow dome in the discovery area. The overall project brings the classroom outdoors, enhancing the children's time at school.

## Creating Connections

Dorset Wildlife Trust worked to create physical and cultural wildlife connections among local landowners, communities and individuals, focusing on orchards and hedgerows in the AONB. Outputs included 6 advisory visits in West Dorset (1 hedgerow & 5 orchards), 3 rural skills workshops (with a total of 21 participants), a wildlife survey of Bridport community orchard and 4 separate practical conservation tasks, involving hedge laying, with 34 volunteers laying 590 metres of hedge.

## Coast & Community

This was a successful wildlife recording project, and included training days for volunteers to record the marine life along the Dorset coast. Training days were well attended, with recordings now being sent in and being recorded for the marine database.

To support the surveys, marine life identification charts, survey forms, and codes of conduct have been produced. Mid-Dorset and West Dorset groups have now been established.

## Drawing Inspiration

Crystal Johnson completed her study into one of the AONB special qualities – the rich legacy of cultural associations. Focusing on visual artists, she has highlighted some of the artwork from the past centuries that were clearly inspired by the Dorset landscape including the works of Nash and Turner as well as lesser known artists.

The report outlines some exciting opportunities to foster these connections in the future to develop an appreciation of the landscape by a wider audience and an understanding of landscape change – both priorities are outlined in the current AONB Management Plan.

[Find out more about SDF supported projects.](#)



# 8 Financial Summary

For financial reporting, the AONB budget and account is organised into three strands: Core, Projects and Sustainable Development Fund. The financial year runs from 1st April 2010 – 31st March 2011.

## Core

This covers the expenditure related to the core AONB staff unit and the operational costs of the AONB Partnership. Natural England funding contributes 75% towards the core budget; the AONB's Local Authorities contribute a combined total of 25%. Dorset County Council contributes half of this with the remaining 12.5% split between the district and borough councils on a pro rata basis – the greater the proportion of AONB in each administrative area, the greater their relative contribution.

## Projects

This strand concerns those projects to which the AONB Partnership contributes with Natural England funding and those projects within the AONB Business Plan which are funded from alternative sources. The AONB team works hard to maximise external funding to support delivery and the 'seed-corn' funding from Natural England to enable this can go a long way. Considerable external funds were levered in – to multiply that invested by Natural England.

<b>Core costs</b>	
Staff including salaries, training & travel	£210,164.12
Accommodation & office (including IT, postage & telephone charges)	£ 11,666.01
Operational costs (research, communications, website, monitoring)	£ 19,046.67
Partnership running costs (meetings, subscriptions & chairman's expenses)	£ 6,661.87
Office volunteers' in kind support	£ 1,200.00
In kind communications support	£ 4,000.00
<b>Total core costs</b>	<b>£252,738.67</b>

<b>Core income</b>	
Natural England	£198,030.94
Dorset County Council	£ 35,100.00
West Dorset District Council	£ 9,100.00
Purbeck District Council	£ 3,500.00
North Dorset District Council	£ 1,000.00
Weymouth & Portland Borough Council	£ 807.73
Office volunteers' in kind support	£ 1,200.00
Fudges Bakery / Mad River Design in kind support	£ 4,000.00
<b>Total core income</b>	<b>£252,738.67</b>

Project	Cash expenditure	Estimated in-kind contributions	NE Grant	NE %	Other funding partners
Woodlink	£ 8,060.00	£-	£ 5,480.00	68.0%	DWT, DCC
South Dorset Ridgeway	£ 51,009.15	£58,000.00	£15,000.00	13.8%	HLF
Wildlife Sites	£141,342.03	£-	£-	0%	Dorset Strategic Partnership
CORDIALE	£ 12,000.00	£-	£12,000.00	100%	
Waterborne Transport	£ 12,500.00	£-	£-	0%	Devon & Dorset Local Transport Plans
Coastal Corridor study	£ 1,713.20	£-	£ 1,713.20	100%	
Dorset Wild Rivers	£ 38,700.00	£ 5,000.00	£ 5,800.00	13.3%	Wessex Water, EA, DWT
Dorset Arable Project	£ 41,879.00	£ 11,594.00	£ 5,000.00	9.4%	Chalk & Cheese, Countdown 2010
<b>Total project costs</b>	<b>£307,203.38</b>	<b>£74,594.00</b>	<b>£44,993.20</b>	<b>11.78%</b>	

# 8 Financial Summary

## Sustainable Development Fund

Provided by Natural England, this fund supports projects which meet aims and actions within the Dorset AONB Management Plan in a way which engages, supports and assists the local community. The fund is open to applications early in the financial year; these are then considered for funding by a representative panel. In 2010 - 2011, the Sustainable Development Fund of £47,978.00 enabled a programme of work with a value of over £527,248.50.

SDF number	Project title	Applicant	SDF funds	Total Value
107	Cheese Training	Windswept Cow Cheese Co	£ 500.00	£ 786.00
108	Black Down Handover	Dorset Countryside	£ 2,000.00	£ 5,502.50
110	Charmouth Bridge	Dorset County Council	£ 5,000.00	£ 373,000.00
111	Deer Management Leaflet	Poole Basin Deer Management Group	£ 2,000.00	£ 1,336.00
114	Interactive Smugglers Experience	National Trust	£ 2,500.00	£ 7,026.00
115	Jurassic Journey	Artsreach	£ 3,000.00	£ 10,693.00
126	Lyme Regis Fossil Festival	Lyme Regis Fossil Festival	£ 10,000.00	£ 16,500.00
118	Drawing Inspiration	Crystal Johnson	£ 2,500.00	£ 3,685.00
119	Dorset Horserwise	FWAG	£ 2,000.00	£ 2,953.00
120	Creating Connections	Dorset Wildlife Trust	£ 2,240.00	£ 4,706.00
121	Combining Coast & Communities	Dorset Wildlife Trust	£ 5,350.00	£ 12,387.00
122	Wet Wood Link	Dorset Wildlife Trust	£ 4,980.00	£ 7,020.00
116	Dry Stone Walling - Chapmans Pool	Dorset Countryside	£ 1,060.00	£ 78,004.00
123	Guardianship Scheme	Purbeck School	£ 1,000.00	£ 2,000.00
125	Thorners School Wildlife Area	Thorners School	£ 848.00	£ 1,650.00
127	Zig Zag Path	Dorset County Council	£ 3,000.00	
			<b>£47,978.00</b>	<b>£527,248.50</b>

# 9 The Dorset AONB Partnership

The Dorset AONB Partnership is an independent body, made up of 20 organisations with an interest in or responsibility for the landscape and natural beauty of the area. The work of the Partnership is guided by a 5 year Management Plan which through consultation and collaboration, sets out priorities for action for the period 2009-2014.

The Partnership Board meets 4 times a year to steer and oversee action, discuss and resolve issues impacting on the AONB and to monitor progress. A Steering Group of funding partners also meets to oversee use of resources and support the Team Manager.

The Dorset AONB Team takes on many of the major priorities outlined in the Management Plan and leads their implementation, which are mapped out in an annual Business Plan drawn up by the Team Manager. In 2010 - 11, the team consisted of 9 staff (6.5 full time equivalents) and is hosted by Dorset County Council.

## Dorset AONB partner organisations

Natural England  
Dorset County Council  
West Dorset District Council  
Purbeck District Council  
North Dorset District Council  
Weymouth & Portland Borough Council  
Forestry Commission  
Environment Agency  
English Heritage  
Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site Team  
National Trust  
Country Land & Business Association  
National Farmers Union  
Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils  
Dorset Biodiversity Partnership  
Destination Dorset  
Devon County Council  
Somerset County Council  
East Devon District Council  
South Somerset District Council

## Dorset AONB staff team

Tom Munro	–	Team Manager
Ian Rees	–	Countryside Officer (started June 2010)
Sue Mitchell	–	Access, Recreation & Transport Officer
Jennifer Clarke	–	Landscape Planning Officer
Sue Dampney	–	Communications Officer (part time)
Katharine Wright	–	Support Officer (part time)
Alison Turnock	–	Biodiversity Officer (part time, hosted by Purbeck District Council)
Sarah Harbige	–	South Dorset Ridgeway Heritage Project Officer
Jake Hancock	–	Wildlife Sites Officer (part time, contract ended in March 2011)



# 9 The Dorset AONB Partnership

Dorset AONB is part of a family of 46 AONBs in the UK. Through the National Association of AONBs and the South West Protected Landscapes Forum we work collaboratively with these other AONBs to access new resources, share good practice and create a strong voice for protected landscapes.

## National Association of AONBs

Negotiations at a national level with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) resulted in Defra taking over the sponsorship responsibility for AONBs from Natural England, putting AONBs on a level footing with National Parks.

New branding has been developed by NAAONB for AONBs to show they are part of the UK family.  
[www.landscapesforlife.org.uk](http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk)

## South West Protected Landscapes Forum

As well as securing the £3.1M Interreg funding for the Cordiale Project (see P7), the Forum has co-ordinated and facilitated Dorset AONB input into the 1SW cycling project (P13) and undergrounding sections of Western Power powerlines. [www.southwestlandscapes.org.uk](http://www.southwestlandscapes.org.uk)

## Keep in touch!

If you would like more information about the Dorset AONB, please do visit our website or get in touch by phone or email.

You can also subscribe to our free monthly E-News which highlights things to do in the AONB, events, updates on projects and opportunities to get involved. Simply email us with your name and email address, which will only be used for the Dorset AONB E-News and not shared with others.

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